

JUNE 1932

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# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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## LURID OLD-TIME NEWS-AGENTS POSTER

Smashing window poster used by English news-agents in the 1880's to help sell penny parts of one of the most sensational Penny Dreadfuls ever published. Everything depended on getting these publications off to a flying start with the first two parts so that readers would stick to the end. Reproduced here through courtesy of Mr. G. Meredith, Folkestone, England. Note Jack "springing" through the air. Some heels, we say!

VOLUME TWO

NUMBER EIGHTEEN



## GALLOWS-FRUIT

BY ROSS CRAUFURD

As I write, I have before me a little pile of books. Let us glance at these time-worn volumes. Ah! here's "Tyburn Tree," flanked by "The Outlaws of Epping Forest". And there, shadowed by "Black Bess", are "Dashing Duke" and "Dick Turpin".

In their day, these books were anathema to parents of Victorian England and caused self-righteous gentlemen of the press to launch columns of printed wrath at the depravity of "modern" juvenile literature.

For these are the notorious "penny bloods", so called because they were published in weekly instalments of eight pages, priced at one penny. And, in them, blood flows by the bucketfuls and dark deeds are accompanied by the crashing of thunder.

The very titles are a stimulant to the imagination. Romantic visions of masked and cloaked figures fit across the mind, and we can almost hear the clatter of horses' hoofs as our gallant highwaymen gallop merrily along the moonlit road that leads to the gibbet.

Perhaps the most famous of the bloods I have just mentioned is "Black Bess, or, The Knight of the Road". It enjoys the distinction of being the longest romance in the English language. It was published by E. Harrison in the 1860's, and ran to 254 numbers—a total of 2028 closely printed pages. Lads who started to read the story in their teens were grown men before they came to the long-awaited words, "The End".

Edward Viles is generally credited with the authorship, but competent authorities state that the great J. F. Smith wrote the better part of the tale.

In it, the curious reader will find displayed all the picturesque paraphernalia of romance and high ad-

venture—audacious highwaymen, maidens in distress, ghosts, murdered misers, buried treasure, smugglers, rascally innkeepers, thieves' kitchens, hairbreadth escapes, deserted mansions, and thrilling encounters with the Bow Street runners. The tale abounds in incident, and at times the pitch of excitement is brought to a very high point.

If one can overlook the occasional purse-lifting peccadilloes of the heroes, one will find them endowed with all the stock nobility of character so dear to the mind of a romance-reading public. What violence they commit is done either to punish the evil or else for the rather excusable purpose of saving their own skins.

However, when we consider the questionable morality of "Tyburn Tree, or, The Mysteries of the Past", it is easy to understand why a general outcry was raised against all works that attempted to glorify "the gentry of the high-toby". Here is real cause for an upholding of hands in horror.

The author, James Lenbridge (or Lindridge), was evidently a man of some talent. He had the knack of concocting a lively though highly flavored tale. Unfortunately, he chose to stress the unheroic side of his heroes' lives. There is very little maiden-in-distress rescuing, and a great deal of coach stopping, purse snatching, and blood letting; to say nothing of various intimate scenes that verge upon the pornographic.

After devoting four hundred odd pages to presenting a life of crime in an attractive light, the author takes his principal characters to the gallows or causes them to be murdered, and concludes with a hypocritical paragraph telling the reader that his heroes have met with their just deserts.

This edifying work was first pub-



the glowworms of North Moore Street. I am ashamed to admit that at this day I cannot even remember what became of all those stacks of novels and story papers in my room. I never even missed them.

But forty years makes a lot of difference sometimes. You would have thought so in my case could you have seen me at home last Sunday afternoon working over a torn and weather-beaten old copy of the Boys of New York, trying with transparent paper and thin rubber cement to salvage what was left of it, and to restore its torn pages to something more like a specimen of the printer's art than a paper waif from the city's streets. For this tattered fragment was what was left of one of those copies in that stack which I abandoned to its fate in my room back in 1891. Every page—every story and illustration—looked like an old friend. It was good to get another look at it again after all these years. It was the first copy of my favorite story paper offered to me after I had put up my wants to some of the members of the Happy Hours Brotherhood, and was sold to me cheaply for just what it was, a copy in fair shape, stamped. I had no complaint to make. I was glad to get a copy in any condition just to see what the old-timer looked like, but I had been unable to erase from my memory those fine, perfect copies in the old stacks I left behind me, and the sight of this wreck of what had once been a copy of one of the grandest story papers ever printed in any language, was a shock indeed.

As all you regulars know, Boys of New York is an eight-page paper, nearly the size of a daily newspaper. Handling half of it at a time, I spread the two four-page sections out flat in a double spread on two large sheets of heavy artist's illustration board such as is used by artists and designers on which to paint in colors or wash, or to mount photographs in groups for retouching or special background work. This board is backed on both sides with paper of equal substance, so that it remains perfectly flat as long as nothing is pasted to it. Gradually smoothing and pressing out the wrinkles I soon had the story paper sheets gently stretched out and held firmly all around with flat stamp hinges (the best peelable kind,) just a bit of the gummed side of the hinge attached to the paper, and the rest to the board. Then, after putting a few sheets of newspaper on top of each board for protection, I put the two boards with their precious mountings under the rug in the living-room, where everybody in the house could walk over them for a few days.

Finally, Sunday afternoon, with long strips and large squares of thin, transparent paper (same as Dennison's tape, but without gum,) a can of rubber cement and a good brush, I proceeded to patch up that old story paper relic of the eighteen-eighties so that it looked good enough to exhibit as a rare museum piece, being rather handy about such things from having

## PRIZE PACKAGES OF NICKEL NOVELS

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By Frank T Fries

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I have three bound volumes of nickel novels that I consider prizes, and I wouldn't part with them under any consideration. The Handsome Harry volume, I procured twenty years ago. It consists of the entire issue of this library. I was going to say "series," but it is not a series; it is a "serial."

There are 16 numbers, each one is an installment of a 16-part story and there are 32 pages in each number. It is the longest nickel novel story ever published. This library was published over thirty years ago. Before that time the story: "Handsome Harry, of the Fighting Belvidere," was started as a serial in "Boys of New York" story paper and continued in "Happy Days." It was originally published in England.

Bill Grunt, a sailor, Ching Ching, a Chinaman and Sampson, a colored man, furnished lots of comedy throughout the story, which dealt with a young fellow named "Handsome Harry," who had been wronged by the villain, whom he chased all over the seas and in many foreign lands, with the aid of his friends and the ship "Belvidere." At last he killed the villain, but was himself captured and tried as a pirate. Of course, he was found not guilty and everything ended right.

Another of my prized volumes contains the first 26 numbers of "Frank Reade Library." These stories are all about marvelous inventions, such as: Steam men, steam horses, electric submarine boats, air ships, overland cars, and so forth. The first story of Frank Reade was originally printed in early numbers of "Boys of New York," and was entitled: "Frank Reade's Steam Man of the Plains; or, The Terror of the West." It was later reprinted in the library, as was also the first Frank Reade, Jr., story. Both stories are contained in the bound volume.

These early Frank Reade stories were usually about Indian fighting. Our hero and his two servants, Barney, the Irishman and Pomp, the coon, would travel on the great plains, rescuing maidens in distress, covered wagon parties or anyone else in danger from Indians or outlaws. The steam man would charge right into the mob and, while Pomp did the driving, Frank and Barney would pepper away with their Winchesters through loop holes in the bullet-proof netting which completely covered the carriage that was hitched to the steam man or horse and in which our friends rode with all the comforts of home. They accounted for more Indians than Buffalo Bill ever dreamed of.

My other prized volume contains Nos. 1 to 26 of Pluck and Luck, and it is made up of adventure stories of all kinds.



## HOW WE DID IT IN 1894

(See cover illustration)

Not much courtesy shown the masked gangsters in 1894. Dick, the young engineer, was too quick for them. They were totally unprepared for his sudden appearance upon the cowcatcher from the cab, rifle at his shoulder, shouting: "Hands up, or you'die!" A grand old Tousey woodcut from "Happy Days," No. 7, December 1, 1894.

Fellow members, we owe our thanks to Fred T. Singleton, 25 E. Palmer Ave., Detroit, Michigan. At great personal expense he had made the fine heading for our magazine, which you see at the top of the front cover, and the copper-plate halftone cut which also appears on page one. He has even furnished the coated paper for this edition and sends his best wishes to the members of The Happy Hours Brotherhood.—Ralph F. Cummings, Pub.

FRANK READE, Jr., DOES SOME *REAL* TRAVELING

By Frank T Fries

About four years ago I bought a dozen "Frank Reade Weekly Magazines" of Bob Smeltzer for 75c each, which was exactly 15 times the original price 20 years before that. After reading them I found that Fred Lee had some other novels I wanted, so I traded the Reades to him. Then he discovered that Smeltzer, the original possessor, had something he wanted, so back went the Reades to Bobbie. Next, Ralph Cummings traded them away from Bob, and just last week I purchased them from Reckless Ralph for \$1.50 per each, just twice what they set me back four years ago and 30 times what they would have cost 24 years ago. Does anyone want to buy them from me? Try an' get em! Frankie is staying in Orrville, Ohio, From Now On!

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**DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP**

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## THE CLAYTON CORRAL

Howdy, pards! In this particular broadcast from the CLAYTON CORRAL I'm just going to be the announcer. I've got a real Westerner here to speak to you-all, one who writes mighty fine novels and serials for *Ranch Romances* and the other CLAYTON Western romance magazines. Mr. Frank C. Robertson at the mike:

"The most sustained adventure of my life lasted thirty days, and was no adventure at all. I was eleven years old at the time, and the thirty days were spent with my father in a covered wagon moving from northern to southern Idaho, through the states of Washington and Oregon. We crossed the Snake river desert, and at that time it was a real desert; no irrigation projects, no highways, no nothing. It was sixteen miles between water stations, we had no feed for our horses, and very little food for ourselves. I recall how we sold one article after another to supply these needs. Extra harness went first, then our tent, horse blankets, logging tools brought with great trouble from our timber claim in the Moscow mountains. I can still feel the pain of my lips, sore and swollen from the choking clouds of alkali dust. But we reached our destination; limping in with one gallant old horse pulling the wagon by a stay chain, while his given out mate carried one end of the neck-yoke. We stopped three times to rest on the last five miles, and we had exactly seventy-five cents when we pulled into the yard of the one person we knew in south Idaho. But one sacrifice we hadn't made. I had a dog, for which we were several times offered five muchly needed dollars, but the dog went through with us.

"Our new home was a little settlement entirely surrounded by range

used by both cattle and sheep. My oldest brother became a cowpuncher. My other brother was both cowpuncher and shepherd, while I, the youngest of the family, alas! was only a shepherd. Thus can be traced the absorption of the range by the sheep herds at the expense of the cow outfits. Still, I did contrive to work on a number of cattle ranches, and managed to become a fairly proficient rider.

"There were few clashes between sheep and cattle outfits in my country. I have herded sheep so close to the cattle range that my cowpuncher brother used to haze a bunch of wild horses through my herd just to show my boss what would happen if we got any closer. And then he would eat dinner at my camp, and give me a stack of magazines which he had carried perhaps twenty miles on a fractious horse.

"The clashes that amounted to anything were between sheep outfits trying to hog the range. There were fights in plenty there, and not a few killings. I've had my share in that sort of range controversy, though the nearest to actual trouble I ever came was when I held a snowdrift over which a rival sheep wanted to cross. My opponent had killed a man or two and had something of a reputation. But I was armed with a rifle, while he had only a Luger automatic. All I had to do was keep him at the proper distance.

"But let it not be assumed that I am claiming to be heroic. On another occasion I ignominiously remained hidden in a grove of aspens all one day while my campmover and a friend collected my sheep from a group of irate Frenchmen who intended doing various unpleasant things to me because I had so manouvered my herd that they had been compelled to keep their sheep bunched up against a creek bank all



one day, and finally retire from a range they wanted to get.

"On another occasion I lost my herd for three days because we had trespassed upon the Fort Hall Indian Reservation at a time when the Indians were feeling resentful. While my boss was being conducted to the Agency to pay his fine two squaws herded the band, while I and a young Indian buck named War-jack loafed about the ridges and watched the squaws do the work. Yet that same spring some of the cow outfits had rather more serious trouble. The Indians frequently tying cattle down and leaving them in such condition that the tortured animals would die in a short time unless released. At that time it looked very much as though there might be a casualty in the family for my oldest brother was the range boss for the white outfits, but the trouble blew over without any fatalities.

"As a homesteader I have had occasion to cuss both sheep and cattle outfits with whole-hearted enthusiasm. My place happened to adjoin the open range, and the poorest creature on earth, next to an Arkansas renter is an Idaho dry farmer. One morning I awakened to find my fall wheat field looking as though a Texas tornado had passed through. From one side to the other there was a strip at least three hundred yards wide trampled flat to the ground where a herd of sheep, in desperate haste to reach the lambing ground, had taken a short cut through it. When I overtook the herder all I got was a pleasant smile, and an "I no spikka da Engleese".

"And on another occasion when we had just threshed our wheat crop, and it was piled out in the sack, some kind-hearted cattleman, who just couldn't bear to see animals go hungry, had neglected to close a gate. The following morning we found fifty head of cattle on top of

what was left of our sack pile.

"In self-defense I became a writer of Wild West fiction."

Let's give Frank C. Robertson a hand, boys! That was fine, every word of it; and to show our appreciation we'll watch for stories in *Ranch Romances* and other CLAYTON MAGAZINES by this real man of the range. 'Sall till next time!

THE CORRAL BOSS

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